



# Ask the Doc

Interview with **Dr. John Snyder** of the Celiac Disease Program at Children's National Medical Center

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Tips for families with celiac disease!

The Celiac Disease Program at Children's National Medical Center is paving the way for treating both the mind and bodies of patients and families living with celiac disease. This fall, we've called on Dr. John Snyder to help our readers learn to cope with the change to a gluten-free lifestyle

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## What to do if a child cheats on the diet?

John Snyder, MD, is the chief of the Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition at Children's National Medical Center located in Washington, DC. Under the direction of Dr. Snyder, Children's National is helping to improve the way pediatric celiac disease is diagnosed and treated. Their Celiac Disease Program brings together a team of expert physicians, nurses, nutritional consultants and professional counselors dedicated to developing a national model for detecting and treating celiac disease in children and families.

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## Treating the Mind & Body

**DGF:** Children's National Medical Center believes the mind and the body must be treated together to ensure the best outcome for patients. How can parents help their child through the "grieving process" of celiac disease? How do parents ensure not only the physical but psychological impact of diagnosis is addressed?

**DR. SNYDER:** A family's approach in how they handle this diagnosis is key. When families are able to look at celiac disease in a positive manner, this helps their child better understand and deal with the diagnosis.

Having a dialog with your child on a regular basis is essential to being aware of how your child is handling this new lifestyle change. An openness for your child to be seen by a professional counselor is also is very helpful.

Children's National Medical Center's Celiac Disease Program includes a psychologist to help children and their families adjust to the lifestyle changes associated with celiac disease.

**DGF:** What if parents suspect their child is sneaking gluten-filled foods outside of the home? Should parents have their child's blood work checked routinely to ensure their child is maintaining a gluten-free diet?

**DR. SNYDER:** There are children who have a really hard time after their diagnosis and feel "it's not fair."

Parents need to convey that there's nothing the child did to make this happen. It's simply how their body was made up and they have no control over it. When there is a concern from the family that the child is not following the gluten-free diet and may be "cheating," one way to know is from the child's symptoms.

However, not all children show outward symptoms, so there can be children who are sneaking gluten, but not showing much in the way of indicators. That is when the blood tests are done.

We routinely perform these same antibody tests used to screen and diagnose celiac disease once a year. These tests will tell us if the child is following a gluten-free diet. If the child is following the gluten-free diet carefully, then their antibodies will be normal. If the child's antibody levels are not normal, then it means they are getting gluten in some fashion.

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[www.ChildrensNational.org/Celiac](http://www.ChildrensNational.org/Celiac)





### 3 Does everyone have to be gluten-free?

**DGF:** What is your advice for families who have a gluten-free child as well as other children who do not have celiac disease? Does the entire household need to go gluten-free? What if it is not financially feasible?

**DR. SNYDER:** Going entirely gluten-free eliminates the risk of cross contamination as well as the gluten-free child feeling emotionally different within the home.

However, economics certainly comes into consideration as well as other siblings' food preferences. In today's economy, there are times when it is not financially feasible for families to go entirely gluten-free.

While the cost of gluten-free food is more reasonable than in the past, there are instances when an entire family cannot financially go gluten-free. Families need to weigh the options of a gluten-free household versus the overall financial impact and choose what is best for their personal situation.

There is no exact answer – families have successfully gone entirely gluten-free or remained a mixed household. Either way, meeting with a skilled dietitian can help make the process a smooth transition.

### 4 What support is available at CNMC?

**DGF:** It can often be difficult to find the right resources when you're newly diagnosed. Can you tell us what support families at Children's National Medical Center receive upon first diagnosis?

**DR. SNYDER:** At Children's National Medical Center our program covers the broad picture – addressing physical, emotional and nutritional needs. We do this by providing our patients with access to skilled doctors, dietitians, psychologists and mentors to help them adjust to the gluten-free diet.

Another key to families successfully entering the gluten-free realm is a strong support system. We link all of our families with mentors who have gluten-free family members and have gone through this experience. It's very important to have someone they can relate to and turn to. We can help with anything from cleaning out a pantry and grocery shopping, to training a school cafeteria about maintaining a gluten-free safe area for the children. We also provide every newly diagnosed patient with a gift bag that contains dozens of gluten-free foods, as well as a brand new toaster that can become the household's dedicated gluten-free toaster.

# Go with your gut

pun intended

## Is your gut telling you something may be wrong with your diet?

When your immune system is activated by incompatible foods it can cause a wide range of symptoms: IBS, migraine headaches, weight issues, joint pain, skin and respiratory problems, ADD/Hyperactivity, fatigue and many more.

**Almost 70% of the immune system is in the gut.**

There's one simple blood test, scientifically proven, that tells you which foods may be a problem for you.

*According to a study conducted at Baylor University, 98% of people following The ALCAT Rotation Diet either lost weight or improved body mass.*

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